

appreciation of court reporters across the country.

Court reporters play a critical role in our communities. They are the guardians of our public record. They have unique skills translating the spoken word into text to be recorded for history. They preserve judicial proceedings and assist individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.

I have seen firsthand the dedication and professionalism shown by court reporters from my time as a special prosecutor in Wisconsin and, more importantly, from my wife Tawni, who has been a court reporter in western Wisconsin for nearly 25 years. I wish her a happy Valentine's Day today.

In addition to the critical role court reporters play in the courtroom, the National Court Reporters Association and its members have made significant contributions to the success of the Veterans History Project. The Veterans History Project, which was created by legislation that I authored, is the largest oral history collection in the world, having collected over 100,000 stories from our Nation's veterans. Their stories are permanently stored at the Library of Congress and are available to the public.

Shortly after the Veterans History Project was launched in 2000, my wife Tawni encouraged court reporters across the country to partner with the Library of Congress to assist in transcribing veterans' stories; and to date, court reporters have submitted over 4,000 oral history transcripts to the Library of Congress. Not only have court reporters been willing to work with the Library of Congress to transcribe stories that had already been submitted, but many court reporters have personally gone and interviewed veterans in their local communities.

For example, last August, at the court reporters' national convention, the National Court Reporters Foundation celebrated Purple Heart Day by interviewing eight Purple Heart recipients for the Veterans History Project. Additionally, the National Court Reporters Foundation recently launched a new program called the Hard-of-Hearing Heroes Project, where veterans with profound hearing loss will be interviewed for the Veterans History Project through the use of realtime captioning.

This is important because, according to the VA, hearing loss is one of the most common service-related injuries, and it is estimated that 60 percent of our veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan suffer some form of hearing loss. The program will help ensure every veteran has a chance to share his or her story.

As we celebrate National Court Reporting and Captioning Week, I want to thank the National Court Reporters Association and its many members throughout the country for their hard work and professionalism. I especially want to thank the court reporters for their significant contributions to the

Veterans History Project and to preserving veterans' stories for generations to come.

VENEZUELA SANCTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the new administration, including Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, OFAC, took decisive action to hold Venezuelan regime officials accountable for their illicit activity.

The announcement was that two Venezuelan nationals were labeled as "specially designated narcotics traffickers" pursuant to the Kingpin Act, including Venezuela's second in command, the Vice President of Venezuela, and his front man, Lopez Bello. It also identified 13 companies owned or controlled by these individuals or other designated parties that pose a serious threat to U.S. national security as well as the U.S. and global financial systems. These designations were long overdue, Mr. Speaker, and represent a significant first step in what appears to be a positive, fundamental shift in our policy toward Venezuela.

Just yesterday, my colleague MARIO DIAZ-BALART and I met with Vice President PENCE to discuss Venezuela and how Congress and the administration can work together to craft a positive agenda to help the people in Latin America suffering without democracy or human rights.

Last week, Senator BOB MENENDEZ of New Jersey and I led a bipartisan and bicameral letter—together with 32 of our congressional colleagues—to the President urging his administration to take immediate action against the Maduro regime for his illicit activity and for its gross human rights abuses. While this round of sanctions target the illegal drug activities of these officials, this is just the tip of the corruption iceberg in Venezuela, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, Venezuela's so-called Executive Vice President has facilitated drug shipments, has protected drug traffickers in Venezuela, and has alleged links with the U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization and Iranian proxy, Hezbollah. According to OFAC, the Office of Foreign Assets Control, the second individual also sanctioned is Lopez Bello, who laundered drug proceeds and generated significant profits as a result of illegal activities.

Holy Toledo.

While these announced sanctions were a critical first step, it pales in comparison to the dire humanitarian situation that Maduro and his cronies have created for the people of Venezuela. Mr. Speaker, Venezuela has been on a downward spiral for years, and there have been bipartisan calls from Congress to take action in support of the Venezuelan people.

Maduro's failed economic policies have the country with the highest in-

flation rate in the world leaving his people without food, without basic necessities, without medical supplies. In most areas, hospitals and groceries have shut down due to lack of supplies, and the people of Venezuela are forced to ransack what is left of these hospitals and stores for the basic survival of their families.

How does the regime react when they see the suffering of their own citizens? They are lining their own pockets at the expense and the suffering of the Venezuelan people. An AP report showed that senior-level officials like Generals Rodolfo Marco Torres and Carlos Osorio are allegedly orchestrating fraudulent schemes with suspected shell companies to personally profit, instead of bringing food to the people.

Opposition leaders like Leopoldo Lopez and Antonio Ledesma are still in jail or under house arrest. Leaders like Maria Corina Machado of the National Congress is still not allowed to travel outside her country. This is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. Their so-called crimes: speaking out against the Maduro regime and standing up for democratic principles.

The regime stifles all who stand for democracy and freedom in Venezuela. The opposition is vilified, is persecuted, and is arrested on false charges. We must show Venezuelans that their fight is not in vain, that their actions are seen, and that their cries are heard.

Next on the sanctions list should be the judges and officers of these kangaroo courts in Venezuela who are behind this unwarranted incarceration and are responsible for the injustices and human rights violations.

Mr. Speaker, this is what America is all about. We stand firmly by our values, firmly in our ideals, and we promote and defend them, and we try to have other parts of the world be enlightened in this way.

Hope is dwindling quickly in Venezuela. As human rights violations multiply, now is the time to hold Venezuelan regime officials accountable, and we urge all responsible nations to join us in this struggle.

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LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. POCAN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POCAN. Mr. Speaker, if you would have asked me when I first got elected to Congress, would I ever expect to be in a position, months after a Presidential election, about whether or not the integrity of that election was at stake, I would have said "of course not."

Our democracy's strength is that any adult has an equal say in it through their vote; that the wealthiest or the poorest, the youngest or the oldest adult, regardless of their gender, race,

religion, or sexual orientation, we all have an equal say in our democracy via our vote; which is why the vote is so important. It is the great equalizer and it gives us confidence in our government, that whoever the people select to be President should be the force of the majority.

But the concern I am speaking about today is the concern that somehow the election this past November might have been interfered with by another government.

Now, I know we have all heard about the intelligence community's classified report regarding Russian hacking and interference in our elections. I have read it and so have many of my colleagues. And, allegedly, President Trump has read the document as well.

My concern is that we seem to have different interpretations of a document that is very clear about unprecedented outside interference. For those of us who have read it, shock. Shock that another country would be so cavalier in their approach to interfere with an election, to manipulate the truth, to go farther than we have ever seen in trying to get the outcome they wanted and ultimately got.

There is no secret that President Trump has an unnerving affection for Russian President Vladimir Putin. Trump has called Putin "very smart." He claimed Putin was a better leader than Barack Obama. And Trump even defended Putin in a recent interview with a FOX News talk show host.

The connections to Russia and his Cabinet are equally unnerving. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had numerous business dealings with Russia, and was even recognized by Putin with the Order of Friendship in 2013.

But it doesn't stop there. Just last week, U.S. investigators confirmed that parts of the 35-page intelligence dossier, compiled by a former British spy, were accurate. The dossier contained still unconfirmed details of an all-too-cozy relationship between Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Trump Cabinet.

Just yesterday, President Trump's own National Security Adviser, Michael Flynn, resigned after being busted for having potentially illegal conversations with the Russian Government regarding lifting sanctions on the country prior to President Trump taking office; conversations he had previously misled to the FBI and the Vice President.

Who else knew about Flynn, and when did they know about it?

Now, I don't bring this up as an effort to get back into a Cold War with Russia, as some seem to condone. I am disgusted by the Russian Government's scapegoating of the LGBT community and their authoritarian approach to civic affairs. I think getting back into a Cold War would be a terrible idea, and there are some areas around the globe where we could welcome cooperation to solve humanitarian crises.

My concern lies in that the Russian Government did something, hacking

and interfering in our elections with the intent of electing their choice for President, Donald Trump. That must be addressed through sanctions and safeguards to make sure it never happens again.

If anyone in the executive branch is suggesting lifting any sanctions after what just happened, there needs to be a public dialogue about why, because if they read the same report that I did, there is no way that would be the appropriate response.

But given President Trump's unwillingness to accept the reality of the Russian interference in our election, given the closeness of several leading members of the President's Cabinet to Russia, and given the recent resignation of our National Security Adviser over his dealings with Russia, I feel it is imperative that the American people get all the facts.

Should we be lifting sanctions against a country our intelligence community tells us intentionally, and in multiple ways, tried to interfere with our elections and, ultimately, get the person they wanted elected? Or should we be doing even more to guarantee the sovereignty of our country and the integrity of our elections in every possible way?

Currently, the House and Senate Intelligence Committees are investigating Russian interference with our elections, and I applaud them for taking the issue so seriously. Personally, I would love to see an outside, non-partisan, independent review as well.

However, we need to take this right to the people. The classified report about election interference by the Russians could, in my opinion, with appropriate protections, be declassified so that the American people could see it for themselves.

Mr. President, I request you ask for that report to be fully declassified. If your administration's assertions are correct, let the American people see it. Let the truth come out.

But my guess is, when they see the totality of the report, there will be a lot of explaining for this administration to do, both about our response to Russia and how we protect our elections in the future.

It is really that simple. Let the people decide. Declassify the report.

HONORING BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY ON ITS 70TH ANNIVERSARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York (Mr. ZELDIN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. ZELDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Brookhaven National Laboratory on its 70th anniversary.

The United States is the greatest Nation in the world, and one of the reasons why is Brookhaven National Laboratory. Their science research is aggressively pursuing cures to illnesses, protecting our national security, and increasing our energy independence.

Imagine being able to witness a recreation of the very beginning of our universe, a replica of the primordial soup which once comprised all that had existed right before your very eyes. Also imagine that this very same equipment could be used to find cures to illnesses such as cancer and heart disease.

I am proud that Brookhaven National Laboratory is located in the greatest congressional district in America, the First Congressional District of New York.

For nearly three-quarters of a century, Brookhaven has stood as a world-class research center that conducts groundbreaking studies within the scientific community. Brookhaven asks the big questions that scientists have been researching for generations, and has allowed us to look into the building blocks of our world.

Between preservation of our ecosystem, studies on the environment, and researching new forms of sustainable energy, Brookhaven is a world leader in scientific research.

There is also incredible cultural and historical relevance of the site of Brookhaven National Laboratory. There was once a World War I Army training center called Camp Upton located where Brookhaven stands today. It was at this camp that Irving Berlin wrote "God Bless America" while serving in the U.S. Army.

Brookhaven is not only a local and regional treasure, but also a national asset. The machines in Brookhaven have been utilized by the most brilliant minds in America, from the scientists of MIT and Yale to the engineers at GE and IBM.

While there are 17 national labs across our great country, Brookhaven is a unique user facility which focuses in a number of disciplines, not limited to particle physics, chemical engineering, and systems engineering and integration.

In previous Congresses, critical funding has been provided in support of the ARPA-E program for several of Brookhaven's phenomenal projects on energy production and storage, and so much more.

There has been discussion in the past to cut funding for Brookhaven's nuclear physics program to levels that haven't been seen since 2008. This would be a mistake.

Brookhaven features some of the most important scientific efforts in the world, with assets like the National Synchrotron Light Source II, or NSLS-II. NSLS-II has allowed for incredible advancement in the research and development of superconductors, which have the potential to revolutionize energy consumption in the U.S. and save into the billions for the American people and American businesses.

Another program in need of our continued support is the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider, or RHIC. This multi-faceted machine is essential for studies on matter and has key practical applications, like figuring out